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Human resources management

Human resources management reform

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 55/258, on human resources management, and its decision 56/462, on young professionals.

Considerable progress has been achieved in furthering reform of human resources management in the global Secretariat, and more is expected in the next few years. The Secretary-General continues to be guided by the resolutions and decisions that have been adopted by the Assembly and will seek further guidance, as necessary.

The Assembly is invited to take note of the achievements to date and planned future activities described in the present report which, among other things, aim at ensuring that the Organization's human resources management policies and practices are fully in line with operational needs and worldwide standards of good practice.

* A/57/150.

** The Secretariat regrets that this document could not be submitted earlier owing to the need for wide consultation.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 55/258 of 14 June 2001, on human resources management, by which the Secretary-General was requested to submit a detailed report to the Assembly for consideration at its fifty-seventh session on the results of the implementation of the provisions of the resolution.

2. To facilitate continuance of discussion on human resources management reform, information on key achievements to date and planned future activities to further consolidate and institutionalize progress made is presented under each of the building blocks for reform previously presented to the Assembly in a report of the Secretary-General (A/55/253).

3. In addition, the report presents information on cross-cutting issues, which responds to specific requests of the Assembly in resolution 55/258 and decision 56/462 of 24 December 2001, on young professionals.

II. Background

4. In his 1997 report, entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform", the Secretary-General called for "a simplified structure that avoids duplication and achieves greater impact; empowered and responsible staff and managers; a leaner and more efficient United Nations Secretariat; and an organization that fosters management excellence and is accountable for achieving results determined by the Member States" (A/51/950, para. 224). Among the Secretary-General's initiatives for strategic change was a thorough review of human resources management aimed at creating an organizational culture that is responsive and results-oriented, rewards creativity and innovation, and promotes continuous learning, high performance and managerial excellence.

5. In 1998, the Secretary-General convened the Task Force on Human Resources Management, comprising experts from the public and private sectors throughout the world, to advise him on specific measures and actions for renewal and change. The subsequent report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly (A/53/414) drew extensively on the recommendations of the Task Force, setting out a vision of organizational change and a programme of action to be carried out over the subsequent three to five years. It recognized the need for a paradigm shift to a new culture of empowerment, responsibility and accountability and continuous learning, as well as the importance of strategic change in underlying attitudes and behaviour with regard to human resources management, to ensure successful implementation of the reform measures.

6. The human resources reform programme which has been pursued over the past four years is an integrated one, intended to build the Organization's human resources capacity and its ability to attract, develop and retain staff of the highest quality. It aims to create a more productive, flexible and results-oriented Organization that is better able to meet the challenges set out in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.[1] It has benefited from the extensive consultations held with staff and managers throughout the Organization, as well as guidance from Member States.

7. The changes being introduced take account of the changing internal and external environment, including the development of the United Nations from a Headquarters-based organization to one that has a strong field presence. In addition, the normal turnover of staff due to retirement and available vacancies present an opportunity for revitalizing the Organization.

8. Significant progress has been made in bringing about the changes envisioned in the 10 key building blocks of human resources management: human resources planning; streamlined rules and procedures; recruitment, placement and promotion; mobility; competencies and continuous learning; performance management; career development; conditions of service; contractual arrangements; and administration of justice.

9. Major achievements to date include the following:

(a) Streamlining of policies and rules and launching of the electronic *Human Resources Handbook*;

(b) Definition of organizational core values and core and managerial competencies, and their integration into human resources systems;

(c) Secretariat-wide system of human resource planning;

(d) Strengthened performance management system;

(e) New staff selection system that integrates recruitment, placement, managed mobility and promotion, empowers managers, increases transparency and reduces timelines;

(f) Organizational mobility policy, including time limits on the occupancy of all posts and required lateral moves prior to promotion;

(g) Development of electronic tools to underpin new systems;

(h) Investment in continuous learning in order to build competencies and strengthen substantive skills;

(i) Targeted programmes to build managerial capacity and promote the development of junior Professional staff;

(j) Expanded career support programmes;

(k) Increased attention to work and life issues;

(l) Appointment of an ombudsman, to contribute to a movement towards a culture of conciliation;

(m) Playing an active role in the review of pay and benefits being conducted by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC).

10. Major features of the reform are the leverage of technology wherever possible, and continuing consultation and communication with, and training of, managers and staff across the global Secretariat in the development and implementation of new policies and procedures. Information technology systems are integrated, mutually supportive and contribute to improvements in timeliness, consistency, transparency, universal access, reporting, monitoring and follow-up.

11. Any major culture change requires time, in particular in an organization as diverse and complex as the United Nations. Evidence of cultural change is already, however, beginning to be seen in a number of ways — the seriousness with which heads of department are involving themselves in human resources planning; the willingness of managers and individual staff members to participate in training; the popularity of the mentoring programme; the positive response of young Professional staff to the managed reassignment programme; and increased understanding of competencies etc.

III. Next steps

12. The next few years will see the consolidation and institutionalization of the changes introduced to date, and further improvements aimed at ensuring that the Organization's human resources management policies and practices are fully in line with operational needs and worldwide standards of good practice. There will be continuing close cooperation with other organizations of the United Nations common system and ICSC in developing and enhancing conditions of service so as to enable the Organization to attract, develop and retain staff of the highest quality. In doing so, the Secretary-General will give due attention to the request by the General Assembly that he continue to improve accountability and responsibility in the reform of human resources management, as well as monitoring mechanisms. A concomitant part of monitoring activities is the provision of assistance, guidance and support to managers, as necessary.

A. Human resources planning

Goals

13. To establish a medium-term and long-term integrated human resources planning capacity and system that specifies the Organization's and other objectives at the level of individual departments and offices.

Achievements to date

Secretariat-wide human resources planning

14. Workforce planning activities were developed through the analysis of a selected number of main demographic characteristics of Secretariat staff reported annually in the report on the Composition of the Secretariat.

Departmental human resources planning

15. A human resources planning system was developed and implemented across the Secretariat in 1999; this system includes the convening, on a regular basis, of human resources planning sessions with each head of department which results in a human resources action plan that contains measurable objectives for achieving mandates assigned by the General Assembly with respect, inter alia, to geographical representation,

gender, mobility, vacancy reduction, staff development, performance appraisal and staff-management relationships.

16. In agreement between each department and the Office of Human Resources Management, human resources goals are assigned to each head of department.

17. The human resources action plan forms part of the head of department's programme management plan (i.e. compact) with the Secretary-General.

18. Monitoring of the implementation of human resources action plans is carried out by the Office of Human Resources Management through semi-annual reviews and a final review between the departments and the Office at the end of the planning cycle. In this way, heads of department can be held to account for fulfilling their responsibilities under the plan.

Future activities

19. Further progress in human resources planning will focus on the following activities:

(a) Development of a web-based electronic system for the online preparation, monitoring and reporting of human resources action plans;

(b) Identification of new human resources indicators that capture new priorities of human resources reform and development of a format for human resources action plans that is easier to use;

(c) Establishment in cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, of action plans for peacekeeping missions which respond to their particular needs and priorities;

(d) Development of a workforce planning capacity, including a database of staff available for standby rapid deployment and longer-term mission service, subject to identification of skills and competency needs by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations;

(e) Training of a core of professional and experienced human resources planning officers and human resources planning assistants at United Nations Headquarters and at offices away from Headquarters;

(f) Development of basic human resources planning concepts, tools, procedures and processes and making them available in an online guide.

B. Streamlined rules and procedures

Goals

20. To eliminate obsolete and redundant rules and procedures; to streamline documentation relating to current rules; to allow easier access through electronic means; and to provide the means for consistent and uniform application.

Achievements to date

21. All administrative documents contained in the personnel manual were reviewed. Redundant administrative instructions, Secretary-General's bulletins, information circulars and personnel directives were identified and either consolidated or eliminated, and the remaining documentation was streamlined. As a result, between 1 June 1997 and 31 August 2001, some 460 documents were abolished, allowed to lapse or expired. (A note by the Secretariat on the streamlining of rules, which provided details of the obsolete or redundant documentation, was issued as document A/C.5/56/3.)

22. The electronic *Human Resources Handbook*, accessible on the Intranet and Internet, was developed and launched, providing all Secretariat staff with access to all administrative rules and procedures, including all relevant administrative issuances and circulars.

23. The electronic *Handbook* is regularly updated. Guidelines have been developed on topics of particular importance to human resources practitioners, a complete reference set of all Secretary-General's bulletins, administrative instructions and information circulars has been placed separately on the Intranet, and a number of tools have been developed, including the web site on United Nations forms, which gives staff members electronic access to, and the ability to complete on-screen, more than 150 forms used for administrative purposes.

Future activities

24. The streamlining of human resources rules and procedures will continue through:

(a) Regular updates of the contents of the electronic *Handbook*, taking into account changes to the staff regulations and rules, and new administrative issuances and information circulars;

(b) Continuous updates of the Intranet reference collection (new Secretary-General's bulletins, administrative instructions and information circulars) and of the web site on United Nations forms, in tandem with work being done towards validation of electronic signatures and electronic processing of entitlements through the Galaxy system or other tools;

(c) Further development and posting of tools for practitioners (including guidelines) to facilitate understanding of complex issues and uniformity of interpretation throughout the Secretariat;

(d) Streamlining and simplification of rules with a view to enabling online applications for benefits.

25. Work will commence on the simplification of the substantive aspects of the Staff Rules and Regulations, based on work being done at the level of the common system in respect of common system entitlements.

C. Recruitment, placement and promotion

Goals

26. To develop a more versatile, multi-skilled, mobile and experienced international civil service taking into consideration the predicted needs of the Organization; to select staff on the basis of merit, demonstrated competencies and performance; to ensure that selection decisions are made by managers on the basis of objective, job-related criteria; to provide more career opportunities for staff; and to introduce a more transparent, speedier process for filling vacancies.

Achievements to date

27. A new staff selection system that integrates recruitment, placement, managed mobility and promotion was designed and implemented, effective 1 May 2002, after extensive consultations with Member States, staff and managers. Under the new system, which is aimed at achieving the above-mentioned goals, heads of department are responsible and accountable for making final selection decisions.

28. Administrative issuances governing the new system have been prepared, consulted upon globally, and published. Roles and responsibilities of staff, managers, heads of department, staff-management joint review bodies, the Office of Human Resources Management and local personnel offices are clearly specified.

29. Central review bodies have been established pursuant to section VI of General Assembly resolution 55/258, by which the Assembly approved the amendment of staff rule 104.14, on central review bodies.

30. Generic job profiles have been developed in 35 occupational groups. Work is continuing on the Professional category and is beginning on the General Service and related categories. The online availability and accessibility of the profiles to staff helps to promote transparency and career planning.

31. A global web-based tool for the new staff selection system, Galaxy, has been developed and implemented. It automates the process, promotes transparency and enhances monitoring and tracking capacity.

32. Secretariat-wide learning and communication programmes have been implemented. The programmes, focusing on roles, responsibilities and automated tools supporting the staff selection system, are targeted at heads of department, programme managers, human resources specialists, including directors of administration and chiefs of personnel at offices away from Headquarters, members of central review bodies, and staff at large. Comprehensive briefing materials have been designed and disseminated Secretariat-wide; a dedicated web site has been set up.

33. An electronic help desk for staff has been set up to answer questions and resolve problems associated with the introduction of the new system and its automated support tools.

Future activities

34. The next steps in recruitment, placement and promotion will focus on completing the institutionalization of the new system throughout the Secretariat, including:

(a) Continuation of the development of generic job profiles, including those for the General Service and related categories;

(b) Enhancement of mechanisms to gather information on staff skills (much of the information is now available as a by-product of the Galaxy system in

respect of staff who use it to apply for posts) and of the electronic performance appraisal system (PAS);

(c) Strengthening and implementation of mechanisms for the delegation of human resources authority and its monitoring;

(d) Further development of mechanisms to promote mobility throughout the Organization, for example, managed reassignments and occupational networks.

D. Mobility

Goals

35. To provide the Organization with the means to move people within and between functions, departments, occupational groups, duty stations and organizations of the United Nations system in order to meet its operational requirements; to develop multi-skilled staff able to operate in a multidisciplinary environment; to develop a more integrated approach to the many facets of the Organization's work; to promote better understanding and knowledge at Headquarters of the Organization's work in the field, and vice versa; and to provide staff with more varied career opportunities.

Achievements to date

36. A mobility policy has been promulgated, based on a shift from a voluntary to a managed approach. Mobility, defined as movement within and between functions, departments, occupations, duty stations and organizations of the United Nations system, will be expected of all staff and will be integral to career development.

37. Mechanisms to implement the policy are integrated into the new staffing selection system, effective 1 May 2002. They include:

(a) Time-limited post occupancy: five years for posts up to P-5 and six years for others;

(b) All job opportunities available first for lateral moves by serving staff;

(c) Time-in-grade eligibility requirements abolished;

(d) Promotion linked to mobility — two lateral moves required before promotion to P-5;

(e) Further incentives for mission service;

(f) Occupational networks to facilitate succession planning, mobility and staff development;

(g) Staff development programmes to support mobility, such as, inter alia, people management, supervisory skills, selection interviewing skills, and a series of career development workshops for General Service and Professional staff and for managers.

38. Three voluntary managed reassignment exercises have been conducted for P-2 staff appointed prior to 2000. Through this programme, managers were able to recruit experienced staff, and junior professionals moved laterally to new functions, departments and offices, and duty stations. The voluntary managed reassignment programme has served as a pilot and a model for increased mobility of staff at all levels.

39. An administrative instruction for a managed reassignment programme for junior Professional staff was issued (ST/AI/2001/7), establishing that all P-2 staff appointed through competitive examination after 1 January 2000 are subject to a managed reassignment after their first two-to-three years of service.

Future activities

40. The first managed reassignment exercise for P-2 staff will be implemented in the fourth quarter of 2002.

41. Occupational networks will be established, in consultation with heads of department and supported by the Office of Human Resources Management.

42. Human resources action planning will include the identification of staff available for standby rapid deployment to field missions, as well as those available for longer-term mission service.

43. Based on the results of a Secretariat-wide survey, action will be taken to address work and life issues that may impact on the willingness or ability of staff to be mobile.

44. Mindful of section V, paragraph 7, of Assembly resolution 55/258, the Office of Human Resources Management will monitor the new mobility arrangements, including through departmental human resources action plans and involvement in the occupational networks, and will identify and resolve any problems as they arise, in consultation with departmental managers and the staff concerned. In

addition, efforts will be made to relax host country restrictions that have a bearing on staff mobility.

E. Competencies and continuous learning

Goals

45. To define and validate the core organizational values and competencies required of all staff, as well as managerial competencies; to promote shared values and common standards and build organizational capacity; to integrate the competencies into all human resources systems; and to develop a culture of continuous learning.

Achievements to date

46. A competency model was developed in 1999 that defined core organizational values, core competencies and core managerial competencies, using a participatory process that involved staff and managers at all levels of the Organization.

47. A Secretariat-wide communication programme was implemented to familiarize staff and managers with the competency model, including publication of a booklet, entitled *United Nations Competencies for the Future*.

48. An organizational staff development policy has been enunciated and communicated to all staff. Staff development and learning programmes have been reinforced and new targeted programmes to support the objectives of the reform programme are being implemented for staff at all levels of the Secretariat.

49. Competencies have been integrated into recruitment, staff development and performance management through:

(a) Inclusion of competencies in generic job profiles and vacancy announcements with a view to increasing qualitative information and shared standards in recruitment and selection decisions;

(b) The incorporation of competencies into staff development and learning programmes. Priority areas include leadership and management development, information technology, technical skills, language and communications, and gender and diversity;

(c) Introduction of new programmes, for example, competency-based interviewing;

(d) Publications, including *Career Support Guide*, *Using PAS: A Guide for Staff and Supervisors* and a *Guide to Competency-Based Interviewing*;

(e) Inclusion of the competencies in the revised PAS.

Future activities

50. In the future, the focus will be on promoting shared values and common standards and building organizational capacity by:

(a) Ensuring fuller application of the core values and core and managerial competencies by managers in all human resources processes, including job design and analysis; staff selection and interviewing; performance management and career coaching; and staff development;

(b) Emphasis on institutionalizing a culture of continuous learning, whereby staff at all levels take advantage of on-the-job formal and informal learning opportunities;

(c) Expanded distance learning programmes, including learning via electronic means (e-learning);

(d) Mandatory participation by all managers in leadership and management development programmes to enhance managerial performance and accountability.

F. Performance management

Goals

51. To create a fair, equitable, transparent and measurable system of performance management for all staff members throughout the Secretariat in support of a results-based culture that recognizes and rewards excellent performance and adequately addresses underperformance.

Achievements to date

52. The performance appraisal system was revised, and an electronic system (e-PAS), accessible to all staff throughout the Secretariat via the Internet, was introduced in April 2002. The system is being rolled out progressively in the Secretariat and training has been provided to all users. An e-PAS help desk has been established to resolve any problems and to gather feedback about the system.

53. The main revisions to PAS are as follows:

(a) Incorporation of United Nations competencies to provide a fuller picture of performance;

(b) Provision for multiple perspectives, including the self-assessment by the staff member, feedback from other supervisors and comments by the staff member on supervision received;

(c) Strengthened links to career development by encouraging a dialogue on career aspirations and competencies needed for future assignments;

(d) Enhanced accountability measures by ensuring, inter alia, that all reporting officers complete appraisals for all staff under their supervision prior to assuming new duties;

(e) More flexible work planning applicable to all types of functions.

Future activities

54. All departments and offices are expected to use the revised system by 1 April 2003. In the future, activities will focus on further improving overall organizational performance and accountability through, inter alia:

(a) Development of an expanded ability to do qualitative as well as quantitative analyses of PAS implementation, including work planning, review and appraisal;

(b) Electronic link of PAS data to the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) PAS field(s) and to the automated tool for the staff selection system, Galaxy, as well as to other performance management tools, for example, the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS) and the Programme Monitoring System (PROMS);

(c) Development of support guides for staff and managers and provision of ongoing learning and development programmes.

G. Career development

Goals

55. To build and maintain a highly competent, multi-skilled and versatile international civil service capable of meeting the Organization's present and future needs and, in so doing, to meet the developmental needs and career aspirations of individual staff members.

Achievements to date

56. A comprehensive career development system has been put in place, comprising a career development policy, the promulgation of United Nations organizational values and core and managerial competencies, expanded learning and development programmes, a revised performance management system, a human resources planning process, and the introduction of a more efficient staff selection system.

57. Special programmes have been established for junior Professional staff, in line with the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit and observations of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (the former Administrative Committee on Coordination).

58. A series of career development workshops has been developed for managers and staff at all levels to enhance career prospects by strengthening interpersonal and communication skills, creating career and life planning strategies, and preparing for job interviews.

59. The *Career Support Guide* has been published to present the Organization's policy, values and competencies, clarify the career development roles of staff, managers and the Organization, and provide guidance for effective career planning.

60. Generic job profiles have been developed, enabling improved transparency and provision of more information to staff on job responsibilities and requirements.

Future activities

61. Future activities will be aimed at building an excellent civil service while meeting the career aspirations of staff by:

(a) More systematic success planning, including increased provision of information for staff regarding career paths and career development opportunities through the occupational networks and communication programmes;

(b) Providing continued support for junior Professional staff through managed reassignment,

mentoring and continuous enhancement of development programmes;

(c) Paying greater attention to supporting General Service staff by increasing the availability of information, guidance and learning opportunities through Secretariat-wide occupational networks; strengthening support for career planning; and enhancing training programmes for General Service staff;

(d) Paying greater attention to work and life issues, including measures to support mobility and facilitate spouse employment.

H. Conditions of service

Goals

62. To provide staff with a better work and life environment, and to work with the parties in the common system to develop a competitive compensation system that would enable the Organization to attract and retain staff of high quality. The Secretary-General has indicated that enhanced conditions of service are a crucial element of his overall programme for human resources management reform.

Achievements to date

63. The United Nations is actively participating with other organizations of the system in a comprehensive review of the pay and benefits system being conducted under the auspices of ICSC with the aim of making recommendations to the General Assembly on improved conditions of service. The objective of the review is to design a competitive system that enables organizations to attract, develop and retain staff of high quality and to reward staff on the basis of merit, and which is easier to administer and is more transparent. Details of the review may be found in the annual report of ICSC to the General Assembly.[2]

64. The Office of Human Resources Management has conducted a Secretariat-wide survey of the work and life issues that influence staff members' work and decisions about mobility, including questions relating to family, security, health, location, education and work. The information gathered will be used to address the work and life issues that affect staff throughout the world.

65. Flexi-time and flexi-place measures are being piloted.

Future activities

66. Together with partners in the common system, work will continue towards a competitive and streamlined remuneration system and the simplification of entitlements.

67. The results of the work and life survey will be analysed and measures introduced to address issues affecting staff.

68. Host Governments will be requested to review policies related to spouse employment.

69. Pilot schemes in flexi-time and flexi-place will be expanded in the light of experience.

I. Contractual arrangements

Goals

70. To adapt contractual arrangements in order to serve better the operational needs of the Organization while recognizing different types of situations — stable, continuing work programmes and projects; sudden major surges in the volume and type of work (especially in peace-building, peacekeeping and humanitarian operations), including tasks of limited duration; seasonal fluctuations; and short-term requirements — and introducing greater equity for staff.

Achievements to date

71. The Secretary-General's proposals for improved, more equitable contractual arrangements that are more suited to the Organization's needs were submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session and to the Staff-Management Coordination Committee (SMCC) at its twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth sessions. The proposals envisage simplifying the Organization's current contractual arrangements to provide for three types of appointments: short-term (up to six months); fixed-term (up to a maximum of five years); and continuing (open-ended, with separation benefits).

Future activities

72. Discussions are continuing on the above-mentioned proposals on contractual arrangements.

Further consultation with staff on the proposals is expected to take place at the session of SMCC scheduled to be held in September/October 2002.

J. Administration of justice

73. On the question of administration of justice, the Secretary-General submitted a separate report (A/56/800) to the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session.

IV. Cross-cutting issues

74. By resolution 55/258 and decision 56/462, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-seventh session on a number of issues which are cross-cutting in nature: geographical representation; unplanned vacancies; rejuvenation; young Professional staff; mobility; and accountability, responsibility, monitoring and control mechanisms.

A. Geographical representation

75. In section IV, paragraph 8, of resolution 55/258, the Secretary-General was requested to develop a programme and set specific targets as soon as possible for achieving equitable geographical representation for all unrepresented and underrepresented Member States, bearing in mind the need to increase the number of staff recruited from Member States below the mid-point of their desirable range.

76. In an effort to improve geographical representation in the Secretariat, a number of steps have been taken, including the following:

(a) **Human resources action plans.** Human resources action plans set measurable objectives for heads of department for recruitment from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States, which is undertaken in full conformity with article 101.3 of the Charter of the United Nations;

(b) **Programme management plan.** The programme management plan (the compact) defines the annual commitments of each head of department to the Secretary-General to achieve measurable targets in respect of various programme and management goals, including indicators such as recruitment from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States;

(c) **Staff selection system.** Under the new staff selection system, the selection decision is made by the head of department or office. In selecting the candidate he or she considers to be best suited for the functions, the head of department or office is required to take into account the Organization's human resources objectives and targets, as reflected in the departmental human resources action plan, especially with regard to geographical representation and gender;

(d) **Closer collaboration with Member States.** In order to attract a greater number of qualified candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States, periodic meetings have been held with their delegations with a view to enhancing closer collaboration and improved dissemination of vacancy announcements. Whenever resources permit, advertisements are placed in international, regional or local magazines and journals;

(e) **National competitive recruitment examination.** The number of countries participating in the national competitive examination has increased during the past five years, from 18 in 1998 to 33 in 2002. In 2003, over 50 countries are expected to participate in the examination. Continued and closer collaboration with departments and offices in the global Secretariat has resulted in a greater number of examination candidates recruited into the Organization. In the period between 2000 and end-2001, nine countries registered a change in their status, from unrepresented to below mid-point, eight of which can be directly attributed to the examinations held in 1999 and 2000. Of seven countries that were underrepresented in 2000, three are now below mid-point and one is above mid-point; the other three are still underrepresented. Despite these advances, seven Member States became underrepresented during that period, primarily due to changes in the scale of assessment. In general, yearly recruitment has markedly increased in the period between 1996/1997 and 2000/2001.

B. Unplanned vacancies

77. In section IV, paragraph 3, of resolution 55/258, the General Assembly decided that the deadline for the submission of applications for vacancies should be at least two months from the date of issue of the external vacancy announcement. For unplanned vacancies, such as death or sudden departure of staff, the deadline for

applications for external vacancies may be reduced to 30 days if the Secretary-General deems it to be in the best interests of the Organization.

78. Pursuant to the above decision, vacancy announcements for posts in the Professional and higher categories are posted for 60 days, and for posts in the General Service category at the levels G-5 and higher for 30 days. Every effort has been made to ensure that in instances when it was necessary to post vacancy announcements for less than the stipulated duration, the posting was undertaken in conformity with the provisions of resolution 55/258. During the period from 30 June 2001 to 30 June 2002, there were three unplanned vacancies for which exceptions were requested and granted.

C. Revitalization of the Organization

79. By decision 56/462, the Secretary-General was requested to submit a progress report on the question of young Professional staff in the context of the present report, taking into account the observations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.[3] In its observations, the Advisory Committee drew attention to the comments contained in its report on human resources management reform, accountability and responsibility, personnel practices and policies and management irregularities (A/55/499, para. 5) and stated that it expected the Secretary-General to submit a progress report on the issue of rejuvenation in the context of his report on personnel policy to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session.

80. Further, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, in its above-mentioned report, stressed the importance, in formulating and implementing human resources action plans, of giving priority to ensuring a systematic rejuvenation of the Secretariat and of retaining younger staff, particularly in the light of the age profile of the staff of the Organization.

81. A series of measures has been and continues to be taken in the context of the Secretary-General's programme for human resources management reform with a view to revitalizing the Secretariat from the two perspectives discussed below.

1. Rejuvenation in terms of skills, competencies and variety of experience

82. A number of human resources policies and practices have been introduced or strengthened to support the rejuvenation of staff. They are an integrated part of activities in the following areas:

(a) **Human resources planning.** Human resources indicators used in the human resources planning exercise include those concerning the age structure, staff development and training, mobility and performance management. These indicators help to identify areas that require departmental action, in cooperation with the Office of Human Resources Management, to foster the acquisition of new competencies, skills or experience. As at June 2001, the average age of the Secretariat registered a slight decrease of four months, to 45.6 years;

(b) **Mobility.** The new staff selection policy provides for limited post occupancy, which will require staff to change functions, occupational group, department or duty station. In addition, the requirement of two lateral moves prior to consideration for promotion to the P-5 level will help to ensure that staff have acquired a broader range of competencies and experience before reaching senior positions;

(c) **Competencies.** Competencies are forward-looking. They describe the skills and attributes that staff and managers will need in order to build a new organizational culture and meet future challenges. They help to clarify expectations and define future development needs. Thus, competencies provide staff with the information needed to prepare development plans and possible career paths. Programme managers also build on this foundation to define the substantive and technical competencies required by occupational functions. Staff are expected continuously to develop the competencies required in the performance of their current and future functions. This requirement is reinforced in the performance appraisal process, vacancy announcements and the competency-based interviews for the evaluation of candidates who are seeking lateral moves or promotion;

(d) **Training.** The Office of Human Resources Management is continuously increasing the number and range of training and development opportunities throughout the Secretariat. The core and managerial competencies have been incorporated in staff development programmes so as to provide the means

for staff to acquire or enhance new skills and competencies and to build an organizational culture of continuous learning and excellence;

(e) **Mentoring.** Mentoring programmes have been introduced for new junior Professional staff and for new staff at all levels in a number of departments and offices. These programmes provide a unique opportunity for experienced managers and new staff to interact and share ideas, perspectives and experiences, thus contributing to the rejuvenation of longer-serving staff and to the integration of new staff.

2. Young Professional staff

83. A number of measures and activities have been carried out with the view of attracting, retaining and developing young Professional staff, including the following:

(a) **Recruitment.** The number of countries invited to participate in the national competitive recruitment examination has increased from 28 in 1998 to 62 for the 2003 examination. Recruitments through the examination are on the rise: the number of Professional staff recruited increased from 24 in 1996/1997 to 87 in 2000/2001;

(b) **Mobility.** A managed reassignment programme for junior Professional staff has been introduced as a means of guiding mobility, providing on-the-job learning experience and supporting the career development of staff. Under the programme, staff appointed through the competitive examination after 1 January 2002 will obtain experience in two different functions during their first five years of service so as to create a stronger foundation for a satisfying career in the Organization. For staff appointed prior to January 2000, three voluntary management exercises have been implemented. Through this programme, managers were able to recruit experienced staff and junior professionals moved laterally to new functions, departments or offices and duty stations. The voluntary managed reassignment programme has served as a pilot and model for the increased mobility of staff at all levels;

(c) **Training.** Since 1997, the Office of Human Resources Management has been conducting orientation and development programmes for new junior Professional staff. During this five-day programme, longer-serving staff members share their experience and knowledge of the Organization, and participants strengthen their interpersonal, communication, negotiation and drafting skills, and develop a network of colleagues in all areas of the Organization. Regular contact is maintained with these young Professional staff and follow-up workshops and meetings are being organized at all duty stations;

(d) **Mentoring.** A mentoring programme that pairs new junior Professional staff with experienced managers and professionals who share perspectives and knowledge and provide career support and information has been introduced. This new career support mechanism for new junior Professional staff is designed to facilitate their understanding of the Organization, and to complement the initiation, training and coaching offered by their direct supervisors and managers.

D. Mobility

84. In section V of resolution 55/258, the Secretary-General was requested to: develop further criteria for mobility (para. 1); develop further appropriate mechanisms for promotion with a view to introducing adequate incentives for mobility between duty stations, including the possibility of promotion for staff subject to such mobility (para. 4); and ensure that lateral mobility did not negatively affect the continuity and quality of the services required for the implementation of mandated programmes and activities (para. 5).

85. The provisions contained in section V of resolution 55/258 have been followed very closely in the development of the staff selection system, of which mobility is an integral part. The staff selection system promotes mobility within a duty station and between duty stations, including field missions. In order to meet the General Assembly's concern about high vacancy rates in some regional commissions and duty stations, a particular provision regarding promotion to P-5 has been included in the staff selection system. Staff members in the Professional category are required to have two prior lateral moves, which can take place at any level in that category, before being considered eligible for promotion to the P-5 level. However, in order to meet the Assembly's concern about high vacancy rates at some regional commissions and duty stations, in particular those in developing countries, the requirement is reduced to one lateral move when a staff member has served in the Professional category at Nairobi or at a regional commission other than the

Economic Commission for Europe for two years or longer, or when a staff member from another duty station is applying for a P-5 position at those duty stations.

86. With regard to the Assembly's request for proposals to solve problems resulting from increasing staff mobility, the Secretary-General is not in a position to present them at the present stage since the new system was introduced very recently, on 1 May 2002. However, the Secretary-General will monitor the implementation of the system very closely and, in the light of experience, will inform the Assembly accordingly. In addition, the Office of Human Resources Management is taking a proactive approach to promoting mobility, including by supporting the development of occupational networks and giving greater attention to work and life issues that affect staff members' decisions in respect of mobility.

E. Accountability, responsibility, monitoring and control mechanisms

87. In section VII, paragraph 4, of resolution 55/258, the Assembly emphasized, among other things, that any delegation of authority should be in accordance with the Charter and the regulations and rules of the Organization, and should entail clear lines of authority and accountability. In section VII, paragraphs 7 and 8, of the resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to improve accountability and responsibility as well as monitoring and control mechanisms and procedures, and to report on the progress achieved, including with regard to management irregularities.

88. Mindful of the Assembly's concerns, every effort is made by the Secretariat to ensure that the delegation of authority is accompanied by legal and administrative regimes on roles and responsibilities, clearly defined lines of authority and accountability, appropriate training and mechanisms for monitoring and follow-up action, including guidance and support. Mechanisms for accountability and monitoring are an integral part of all human resources activities, and were set out by the Secretary-General in his previous report on human resources management reform (A/55/253). These mechanisms continue to function and to be improved upon. A most recent example is the new staff selection system which came into effect on 1 May 2002, wherein managerial responsibility and authority is well-defined, managers receive appropriate guidance, support and training, mechanisms for monitoring and assessing the exercise of their authority and responsibility are in place and are known to them in advance, and corrective measures or sanctions are clearly understood.

89. Monitoring and review are activities inherent in human resources management reform, and commonly carried out through built-in mechanisms made possible by information technology. Further enhancement of the monitoring capacity of the Office of Human Resources Management, including the necessary automated support tools, will assist the Office in ensuring that established specifications are respected, that regulations, rules, policies and procedures are adhered to, that human resources performance targets are met, and that guidance, advice and assistance, as well as sanctions, are provided, as necessary. Details of current monitoring activities and the Secretary-General's plan for a comprehensive and integrated monitoring capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management are contained in a separate report to the General Assembly (A/57/276).

V. Conclusion

90. Considerable progress has been achieved in furthering human resources management reform in the global Secretariat, and activities will continue to consolidate and strengthen human resources policies and procedures. Emphasis will be placed on using the human resources function as a strategic tool to drive organizational change and to create the organizational culture envisaged by the Secretary-General. Policies and programmes are, and will continue to be, based on the fundamental principles of responsibility and accountability, transparency, equity and fairness, and efficiency and effectiveness. The Secretary-General continues to be guided by General Assembly resolutions and decisions and will seek further guidance, as necessary.

91. **The Assembly is invited to take note of the progress achieved and the envisaged future activities, as described in the present report.**

Notes

[1] In his report entitled "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century" (A/54/2000), submitted to the Millennium Assembly, the Secretary-General stated, inter alia, that people are at the centre of everything that the United Nations does and that a more people-oriented United Nations must be a more results-oriented organization, both in its staffing and its allocation of resources.

[2] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 30* (A/57/30).

[3] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 7* (A/56/7), paras. 116-117.